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29 April 1965

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: The Rann of Kutch Situation

1. Pakistan appears determined to force an intensification of the crisis with India. According to the British High Commissioner in Rawalpindi, Pakistan today rejected Prime Minister Wilson's proposals for an immediate ceasefire and standstill agreement in the Rann of Kutch, asserting that acceptance would prejudice its claim to the disputed area. The Pakistanis instead again offered a ceasefire based on mutual withdrawal. India has several times rejected this idea for the same reason that Pakistan gave in rejecting Wilson's plea. India had accepted Wilson's proposal yesterday.

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2.  each side may now have nearly a division of troops in Kutch and adjacent areas. Each side is also strengthening its positions along the Punjab border 600 miles to the north, and India is reported to be moving additional armor there. India has charged that yesterday Pakistani troops overran a small Indian position southwest of Biar Bet in the Rann of

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Kutch. Pakistan has also sent foreign correspondents on a guided tour of the battlefield today, thereby publicizing the humiliation of the Indian Army.

3. Taken together, Pakistan's latest actions seem to indicate a new determination to drive Prime Minister Shastri to the wall, forcing him to make good his own bellicose statements or show himself to have feet of clay. In view of India's heavy superiority in numbers of troops (approximately 4 to 1) and materiel, and considering Ayub's previously restrained pronouncements on the Kutch dispute, the motivation for Pakistan's new toughness remains obscure. Clearly, no territory in Kutch is worth risking a counterblow from strong Indian forces on some other front of New Delhi's choosing.

4. It seems likely that Ayub and his advisors have decided in the last few days that Indian bellicosity on Kutch has provided Pakistan with an unusual opportunity, not without risks, to come to grips with problems of overriding national interest. In general terms, Pakistan feels that time is not on its side. Indian military power continues to grow but Pakistan's does not. A military confrontation would be even more dangerous next year.

5. In recent months, India has shown an increasingly hardnosed attitude toward Pakistan, possibly reflecting growing confidence in its own strength. Since last fall India has taken additional steps to integrate the all-important disputed Vale of Kashmir into the Indian union, and more recently it has returned to a more oppressive policy within the Vale.

6. Pakistan, on the other hand, had been unable to respond with anything more than ineffective diplomatic harassment. The Ayub regime has been unable to generate fresh concern among the world's powers about either Kashmir or the question of military aid to India. On the contrary, these questions have been completely overshadowed by the developing confrontation in Vietnam. This was brought home forcefully to Ayub by the postponement of his visit, and Shastri's, to the United States.

7. Until the last few days, Pakistan followed a "no comment" policy which might have facilitated a disengagement without serious loss of face for Shastri. New Delhi, however, publicized the action until its own national honor became irretrievably committed.

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8. Ayub may now calculate that Pakistan's military successes in Kutch, combined with India's comparatively belligerent posture, provides an ideal situation for forcing a confrontation. India cannot escape a large share of the onus for any escalation if it seeks a victory in more favorable terrain. Pakistan may count on escalation bringing new US and UK involvement and new interest in the issue of military aid to India and the Kashmir dispute.

9. Regardless of the outcome, Ayub probably calculates that India will appreciate more keenly the high cost of bad relations with Pakistan. Since Pakistanis are convinced that India will never negotiate seriously on Kashmir merely to generate goodwill and serve moral principles, they seize any opportunity to "lean" on India. Ayub undoubtedly hopes that India's continued fear of Communist China, which he carefully nurtures, will prevent New Delhi from denuding the Himalayan frontier and employing the full weight of its military superiority over Pakistan. The danger of religious massacres--India's 470 million peoples include 50 million Muslims--may also restrain New Delhi.

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